ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 8A

USA TODAY
7 July 1983

STAT

**EARL S. BROWNING JR.**
Guest columnist

# In 1947, Barbie lacked notoriety

FAIRFAX, Va. — The headlines usually read: "U.S. intelligence protected Klaus Barbie, the Butcher of Lyon."

Although it seems easy today for some to condemn what Army counterintelligence officers did after World War II, we are looking at this with 35 years of hindsight.

In 1947, I became operations officer for Army counterintelligence in Germany. Our mission was to detect agents who might perform espionage, sabotage or subversion against U.S. forces.

There was espionage being conducted by almost any kind of group you could think of — Zionists, Ukrainians, White Russians, Balts, Czechs. Borders were shifting, displaced people were everywhere.

And many older, experienced counterintelligence people were going back to the states. Those who replaced them were very well-qualified, but they lacked war experience; some were more inclined to be forgiving of former Nazis than we were.

We had a very large workload, with a great variety of cases. And then, Barbie did not have the importance or notoriety that he later acquired.

In the fall of 1947, his name surfaced at our headquarters. Our people in the Munich region wanted to use him as an informant.

We knew that he was a fugitive, a former SS and Gestapo member with most of his service in France, and that there were vague allegations against him. We usually opposed using Gestapo types because we'd seen too much evidence of their brutality.

But even those of us who hated the Gestapo were willing — on some occasions — to make exceptions based on the importance of the information.

In intelligence work, as in police work, it isn't possible to have complete freedom in choosing informants. His character must be weighed against the value of his information; different people can make widely varying assessments of both.

I felt, along with others, that Barbie had little to offer — so we ordered his arrest. He was interrogated over several months.

And then he was finally released, apparently having been cleared. Upon his return to Munich, the CIC office there again asked to use him. I and the case officers working with me still did not feel that he had important enough information to justify his use as an informant. But our objections were overruled; a decision was made to use him on a restricted basis.

Obviously, the longer he was used, the more valuable he became, and the more involved CIC got. I thought then and still think it was a mistake to get involved at all, but I do respect those who have a contrary point of view; I don't feel that I am in any position to judge what may have happened after I left Germany in August, 1949.

*Earl S. Browning Jr., a retired U.S. Army colonel, served in the Counter Intelligence Corps.*